



Research Article

Pragmatics Instruction in Iranian EFL Context: Analysis of Development Needs, and Instructor Perspectives on Professional Programs

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ARTICLE INFO

Submission History

Received: 2024-11-15

Accepted: 2024-12-21

Keywords

Curriculum design
Iranian EFL instructors
Gender differences
Pragmatics instruction
Professional development

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the professional development needs of Iranian EFL instructors in relation to pragmatics instruction and the disparities in access to training opportunities based on gender and experience. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, this study explored instructors' perceptions of their experiences in training, suggestions for the curriculum, and what changes structured training programs brought about in their practices. It revealed highly significant differences in the perceptions of male and female instructors regarding access to professional development opportunities in pragmatics. Instructors of either gender reported unequal access to training programs; whereas female instructors expressed desires for more tailoring, in terms of support and resources, in this area. Additionally, it identified specific curriculum enhancements that were suggested by instructors to improve the integration of pragmatic skills into language teaching. These enhancements include explicit instruction on speech acts, cultural nuances, and conversational strategies critical in fostering pragmatic competence among learners. It also underlined the need for professional development programs that are going to be responsive to the specific challenges facing Iranian EFL teachers. Results indicated that pre-planned training, to a large extent, shapes instructors' perceptions toward pragmatics instruction: it boosts their confidence and expertise level in teaching pragmatic skills. These findings add to the EFL instruction by highlighting the need for training programs which would provide teachers with tools and objectives they need in teaching pragmatics.



Introduction

Pragmatic competence, the ability to use language appropriately in different social situations, is an essential element in language education. This competence allows one to understand and create language appropriate for different social interactions and takes into account both the cultural and situational contexts. Effective pragmatic competence refers to knowledge of linguistics, knowledge of social norms, knowledge of cultural nuances, and knowledge of conversational strategies; hence, it assumes especial importance in foreign language instruction (Leech, 1983; Taguchi, 2015). The concept of pragmatic competence is therefore very important for EFL learners in their attempt to function effectively in the target language while crossing both cultural and linguistic divides. Without pragmatic skills, learners might suffer from miscommunication or social awkwardness when interacting with native speakers or other English users (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

Although it has been widely recognized as an important aspect of EFL teaching, pragmatic competence has not been widely incorporated into curricula worldwide and in such contexts as Iran. Pragmatic competence refers to a set of language functions that are concerned with one's ability to express politeness, make requests, apologize, negotiate meaning, and use appropriate conversational turn-taking. Research has shown that explicit instruction in these areas not only helps learners perform these functions but also raises their awareness of the implicit social cues within conversations—an important aspect of intercultural communication (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Taguchi, 2015). However, in the Iranian EFL context, there are noticeable gaps in pragmatics instruction, mainly because of the lack of resources, limited focus in teacher training programs, and few professional development opportunities centered on pragmatic competence (Kargar & Shokrpour, 2015; Zare-ee & Gholami, 2017).

The present research reports on a study investigating Iranian EFL instructors' perceptions of pragmatics instruction in three crucial areas of to what extent they have been professionally developed and trained, instructors' suggestions on how curriculum design can be improved and how training influences them towards practices in

instruction. Since teacher beliefs, along with access to resources and professional development, are prerequisites for effective pedagogy, this article also examines the role of gender in shaping instructors' experiences and perceptions of pragmatics instruction to provide insights into the need for inclusive, culturally responsive professional development in the Iranian EFL context.

Pragmatics investigates language use in given contexts, such as sociolinguistic rules, cultural expectations, and conversation strategies. In foreign language teaching, pragmatic competence allows learners to carry out language functions like requesting, apologizing, and showing agreement in ways that are socially and culturally appropriate (Leech, 1983). The importance of pragmatic instruction in EFL lies in the role it plays in developing learners' ability to communicate in real-life situations. Although grammatical and lexical knowledge form the foundation, pragmatic skills will empower learners to interpret such subtle social clues, realize contextual factors, and respond in the appropriate manner for any number of diverse conversation contexts (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Taguchi, 2015).

Research has shown that without explicit instruction, learners tend to develop pragmatic competence poorly, which may lead to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns—especially in intercultural interactions. A case in point is the frequent difficulties EFL learners have with speech acts like requests or apologies, where the use of more delicate language depends on the social context (Taguchi, 2015). Previous research has suggested that even advanced EFL learners may still lack pragmatic competence if they have never directly been instructed on it (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Khezrlou & Atai, 2016). Such explicit instruction would allow learners to negotiate these difficulties by being provided with guidelines on the unspoken rules of language use and the chance to practice these skills in controlled settings.

In Iran, pragmatics has been poorly incorporated into the EFL curriculum. Some factors that have contributed to this gap include a lack of institutional resources, inadequate training for instructors, and a traditional focus on grammar and vocabulary rather than communicative competence (Kargar &

Shokrpour, 2015). As was shown from studies by Zare-ee and Gholami (2017), Iranian EFL instructors mostly have no opportunities for professional development with a focus on pragmatics teaching, which might lead to different practices and conceptions of pragmatic instruction. Besides, the same restrictions influence instructors to teach pragmatics in culturally appropriate ways, possibly hindering learners from improving their communicative competence as a whole.

Recent research also supports the call for pragmatics instruction, highlighting the fact that learners will benefit from curricula that clearly include social language functions and cultural elements in their practice, particularly in diverse and intercultural settings (Al-Qahtani, 2021; Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017). In Iranian EFL students, this development of pragmatic competence is very indispensable because most of them will have to communicate with English native speakers coming from different cultural backgrounds. Pragmatics instruction is important not only in supporting learners' academic language development but also in equipping them with skills necessary for future cross-cultural communication. Thus, understanding the perspectives of instructors about the integration of pragmatics into the EFL curriculum, along with their access to the relevant training, stands in a very crucial place for recognizing and addressing current gaps in the Iranian EFL instructional framework.

The Problem

The development of pragmatic competence is a critical and essential element in the area of language teaching, mainly because it will prepare students to communicate more appropriately and effectively in different social and multicultural situations. On the other hand, pragmatics instruction has been unfortunately overlooked and ignored in the Iranian EFL environment for a long time, which is reflected in both curriculum design and teacher training programs. It is indeed a possibility that students may face challenges because of misunderstandings, which can inhibit them from successfully attaining the skills that would be required in using the language appropriately in different live situations. This problem is realized as a direct outcome of **the existing gap** and, therefore,

poses some serious challenges that may create problems for the development of learners in general.

The extensive research that has thus far been carried out is a clear testimony to the fact that Iranian EFL teachers face a lot of challenges and hurdles in pragmatics teaching. Chief among these salient constraints is a lack of free access to the required resource materials, few opportunities that will enable them to do meaningful professional development to beef up their skills, and an overwhelming reliance on grammar-oriented approaches to instruction in place of genuine communicative ability in their students. These defects, to a great extent, hamper the efforts of tutors in adequately teaching pragmatics. These shortcomings no doubt is a significant way in which tutors' competency is challenged and also significantly contribute to the differences sometimes seen in the methods tutors use for teaching and outcomes learners develop.

It is also important to highlight that although there is great awareness in the body of research on the important role that factors such as gender and teaching experience play in the professional development of teachers, there have comparatively been very few studies taking up the task of looking into the specific and precise ways through which these two factors particularly affect access to pragmatics-related training and, similarly, instructor perceptions about the relevance and need for this type of training. It is indeed possible that the current inequalities in training in educational environments are further enhanced by those inequalities that are based on gender, not to mention the differences in training needs depending on the different levels of knowledge that they have. For instance, it is quite widespread for female teachers to state that they find themselves with a much lower level of access to additional opportunities of professional development and growth in comparison with their male counterparts who generally get a better deal. This statement is a reflection of the broader societal and institutional issues that exist within the Iranian English as a Foreign Language setting.

The current research attempted to make good on these critical gaps in the existing knowledge on the subject by first investigating in detail the professional development needs directly related to

Iranian EFL teachers, as well as closely analyzing the multiple ways in which both gender and teaching experience play a significant role in access to training opportunities and shape their perceptions about pragmatics instruction. The general objective of the project is to gain a valuable and practical understanding of creating inclusive and culturally sensitive professional development programs that arm instructors with the skills and knowledge necessary to integrate pragmatic competence into their teaching effectively. In so doing, the initiative seeks to elevate the general effectiveness of instruction by focusing on these normally underexplored dimensions in instruction. Eventually, instructors will be empowered through designed programs that are thoughtful to deliver high-quality and effective instruction that meets the diversities of their students.

Literature Review

Pragmatic instruction is increasingly being regarded as an integral part of EFL training since the learners have to be pragmatically competent in order to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultures. Pragmatics pertains to the use of language in context, helping learners acquire a more subtle sense of social norms of language use, conversational strategies, and intercultural communication. Studies have also shown that explicit pragmatics instruction significantly enhances learners' communicative competence, especially in intercultural contexts since most of the miscommunication occurs due to cultural and social differences. However, Iranian EFL instructors generally cannot easily reach pragmatics-oriented training, which involves inconsistencies in approaches and concepts of how they can teach the skill.

Pragmatic competence involves sociolinguistic and discourse competence that comprises knowledge of conversational implicature, speech act realization, and maintenance of social appropriateness according to the context given by Leech (1983). In EFL settings, pragmatics instruction provides them with knowledge regarding cultural differences in pragmatics and allows them to develop the use of language in an acceptable form; thus, pragmatics is considered one

of the necessary components of intercultural competence taken by Taguchi in 2015.

Recent studies also support the explicit instruction of pragmatics, since it gives learners organized guidance on how to use language in context and give meaning to social cues; Cahyono et al. (2021). Other studies report that when explicit instructions are absent, EFL learners may be incompetent in comprehending social cues due to a lack of such skills, hence problems in effective communication ensue: Al-Qahtani (2021); Zare-ee & Gholami (2017). These findings point to the necessity for curricula in pragmatics that go beyond grammatical structures to social functions of language and prepare learners for effective interaction in various contexts. Indeed, Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak (2017) have argued that curricula that focus on pragmatics will have to be more than those that stop at grammatical rules but extend to social functions of language and equip the learner to interact satisfactorily within an array of contexts.

There are significant issues of concern regarding pragmatic teaching by Iranian EFL teachers, who often refer to the lack of resources and limited professional opportunities available to them. Recent studies advocate for culturally sensitive pragmatics training, designing activities that incorporate cultural awareness, and using materials that are as authentic as possible. This is also in line with studies conducted in other EFL contexts, such as Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak (2017) and Smith et al. (2021). The use of culturally relevant material was found by Khezrlou & Atai (2020) to notably increase both the learners' participation and their grasp of the pragmatic features. This supports the work of Karimi & Gohari 2020, in pointing out that materials with a learner's cultural background can enhance pragmatic awareness and minimize misunderstanding.

Pragmatic teacher training is also very crucial because it gives the teacher confidence and methods to facilitate the effective embedding of the knowledge of culture and language. Research has demonstrated that pragmatic competence training allows instructors to understand the needs of their learners more and enhances their teaching efficacy in cases of requests, apologies, and politeness strategies. Other authors further show that

instructors' view on pragmatics is habitually dictated by their cultural backgrounds hence culturally responsive training for positive achievement in diversified EFL classrooms.

Literature Gaps

While the importance of pragmatics instruction in fostering communicative competence is widely recognized, there remains a huge gap in research exploring the specific needs of Iranian EFL instructors in this domain, especially regarding the variables of gender and teaching experience. Current studies have mostly overlooked how these factors impact access to professional development opportunities and instructional practices, which may result in inequities in the teaching of pragmatics. For example, gender-based inequalities in educational settings may seriously limit the possibilities for female educators in terms of their access to necessary training programs. On the other hand, less experienced teachers often find themselves in a position of needing more individualized and specific support to be able to confidently develop a high level of proficiency in teaching practical and pragmatic skills, as pointed out by the study by Cahyono et al. in 2021.

The lack of focused and intensive research in this field runs the great risk of retaining a state of erratic instructional quality. As a result, instructors who are not properly armed to rise to the challenges that a class of learners in developing their pragmatic competence demands often find themselves with deficiencies in preparation. Again, knowledge is limited and scant on how teachers' experience and insight in this area can be concretely turned into constructive suggestions aimed at providing substantial curricular improvements in pragmatics instruction.

To fill these gaps, the present study takes a step to explore the intersection of gender, teaching experience, and access to professional development opportunities among Iranian EFL instructors. Specifically, this study aims to explore how these factors relate to instructors' perceptions and curriculum-related suggestions with respect to Iranian EFL contexts in an attempt to bring new light to the challenges they face and offer insights for designing inclusive, needs-responsive professional development programs directed at

improving the teaching of pragmatics in the Iranian EFL context.

Objectives of the Study

The current study was conducted with the following objectives

- 1) To evaluate Iranian male and female EFL instructors' access to pragmatics-focused professional development.
- 2) To gather Iranian instructors' recommendations for curriculum enhancements in pragmatics.
- 3) To assess how structured training programs influence instructors' perspectives on pragmatics instruction.

Research Questions

To achieve the purposes of the study, the following research questions and hypotheses were addressed:

- RQ1.** To what extent do Iranian male and female EFL instructors receive training and professional development opportunities related to pragmatics instruction?
- RQ2.** What are Iranian male and female EFL instructors' suggestions for improving pragmatics instruction in terms of professional development and curriculum design?
- RQ3.** To what extent do training programs on pragmatics affect Iranian male and female EFL instructors' perspectives of pragmatics instruction?
- H1.** Iranian male and female EFL instructors experience different levels of access to pragmatics-focused training.
- H2.** Instructors' suggestions for enhancing pragmatics instruction vary by gender, particularly regarding curriculum improvements.
- H3.** Training programs in pragmatics significantly impact instructors' perspectives on teaching pragmatics, with variation based on gender.

Significance of the Study

This research identifies the training needs of Iranian EFL instructors, especially investigating how gender and years of experience influence instructional practices. Pragmatic competence in EFL teaching is gaining more significance to help learners communicate appropriately across cultures. Research has documented that professional development including explicit pragmatics instruction improves teaching

effectiveness, but access to this training is inconsistent, especially in contexts with scarce resources Smith et al., 2021; Garcia & Lee 2022.

Pragmatic competence and culturally responsive teaching are much too often relegated to the background in Iranian EFL teaching contexts, with professional development programs that fail to prepare instructors in the most effective ways. This current study seeks to inform curriculum designers and teacher trainers about a call for an inclusive, responsive professional development that would target not only pragmatic skills building but also the role of cultural nuance in language instruction. Such kind of training programs are imperative in order to respond to gender-specific needs and in turn equally enable the instructors for the betterment of teaching approaches. To this regard, Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak 2017; and Zare-ee and Gholami 2017 deliberated on the same view.

Recent research suggests that in-service training courses, designed to better meet instructors' specific cultural and linguistic needs, promote instructional quality and learner outcomes alike. Cahyono et al. (2021), Karimi & Gohari (2020). By highlighting how gender and experience shape instructors' access to and use of pragmatics training, this study contributes to a growing corpus of research that foregrounds culturally responsive pedagogies, which have been shown to promote both teacher development and student achievement (Garcia & Lee, 2022; Takimoto, 2019). This study, therefore, emphasizes professional development models that support instructors' ability for linguistic and cultural responsiveness in view of better catering to the needs of students in EFL education.

Methodology

This section spells out the methodology that has been undertaken to investigate the views of Iranian university English language instructors in relation to the following three research questions and hypotheses:

Research Design

The study used an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design examining the research questions. This is a qualitative approach with maximum strength. The qualitative approach provided initial

insight into the perspective of the instructors that informed the subsequent quantitative phase to obtain broader generalizable findings.

Phase 1: Qualitative Exploration

This was an in-depth phase using semi-structured interviews with Iranian university English language instructors so that their perspectives on pragmatics instruction could be established. More to the point, the interviews focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the existing materials being adopted, the problems they faced, and what current strategies were presently being employed in their teaching. Also, the aspects that needed instructional improvement according to the participants' experiences could be ascertained in this way.

Phase 2: Quantitative Exploration

The quantitative follow-up investigation into the effectiveness of the training program on: a) Instructors' perceptions: pre- and post-tests that measured change in instructors' opinions about pragmatics instruction after the training program. b) Instructors' pedagogical practices: qualitative analysis of post-training interview data. Participants The research participants were 100 M.A. and Ph.D. Iranian English teachers from various State and Azad universities in Isfahan, Tehran, Shiraz, and Tabriz. Convenience sampling was employed to tap a wide spectrum of ideas concerning pragmatics instruction for maximum variation in the sample regarding gender, teaching experience, and educational background. These were further divided into two groups, with the treatment group comprising 30 male and 20 female instructors who were exposed to an online training program on pragmatics instruction, and the control group comprising 30 males and 20 females without special training but with research material only.

Instruments

The following are the research instruments exploited in the current study:

Online Training Program for ten weeks - Treatment Group Only: The researchers delivered through Skype an introduction to pragmatics, needs assessment, instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation, and professional development.

Pre-test and Post-test: Identical for the two groups; pre- and post-training view on pragmatics instruction. These tests were researcher-made and

consisted of open-ended questions that required the participants to show their theoretical knowledge about how to teach pragmatics effectively, as well as the ability to make practical pedagogical choices. Their validity and reliability were guaranteed by proper calculation (TOS* and Cronbach's alpha).

Semi-structured Interviews: These were conducted for both groups to obtain qualitative data from experiences, perspectives, and challenges related to pragmatics instruction, including possible changes that might have occurred as a consequence of the training program. The interview protocol was designed by the researcher herself and then subjected to expert validity and clarity checking.

The same questionnaire for both groups was targeted to obtain quantitative information concerning participants' perception of pragmatics instruction and their current pedagogical activity regarding the issue. The researcher-developed questionnaire includes Likert-scale items together with open-ended questions assessing participants' opinions and recommendations concerning the research issue. Reliability was measured through test-retest procedures. Content validity was established by expert review.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection steps included the following:

A pre-test on the perception of both groups regarding pragmatics instruction was administered to all the participants. The treatment group received the online training program. Both groups completed a post-test to measure the shift in their attitudes. Also, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants of both groups and finally, all participants were measured using survey questionnaires.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected was analyzed in the following way: 1) The quantitative data of the questionnaires was tabulated and used the inferential statistics- t-tests and chi-square tests were conducted to compare the treatment versus control groups, and 2) Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed using a thematic analysis technique that encompasses identifying patterns, themes, and changes in the view of participants, especially in terms of how far the training program had an

influence on their view and practice of pragmatics instruction.

Results

Table 1.

Statistical Results of RQ1: Training Access

Gender	Sample Size	Access to Pragmatics Training (%)	p-value
Male	60	70%	<0.05
Female	40	55%	<0.05

The analysis of training access reveals a statistically significant gender-based difference in professional development opportunities related to pragmatics instruction, with male instructors reporting a notably higher rate of access (70%) than female instructors (55%), with a p-value of <0.05. This finding indicates that male instructors, on average, receive more opportunities for pragmatics-related professional development than their female counterparts, a pattern consistent with previous research on gender-based disparities in access to instructional resources (Smith et al., 2021; Garcia & Lee, 2022).

Table 2.

Statistical Results of RQ2: Curriculum and Training Suggestions

Gender	Suggestion	Frequency (%)
Male	Curriculum Revisions	65%
Female	Professional Development Focus	75%

The distribution of suggested improvements for pragmatics instruction reveals distinct preferences based on gender. Specifically, 75% of female instructors recommended a stronger focus on professional development opportunities to enhance their ability to teach pragmatics effectively, while 65% of male instructors emphasized the need for curriculum revisions to better incorporate pragmatic elements. This gender-based difference suggests that female instructors prioritize ongoing learning and skill-building through targeted professional development, potentially to address their perceived gaps in initial training access, as reflected in the RQ1 findings (Karimi & Gohari, 2020).

These preferences align with findings by Garcia & Lee (2022), who reported that female instructors often advocate for more comprehensive professional support, possibly due to facing more limited access to specialized training compared to their male peers. The male instructors' focus on curriculum revision is also supported by Takimoto (2019), who emphasizes that instructors who have benefited from professional development often

prioritize content integration, particularly in areas like pragmatics where established curriculum frameworks may be lacking.

This division in focus reflects broader trends observed in EFL contexts, where male instructors often seek adjustments in teaching materials, while female instructors emphasize structured support systems that address ongoing professional needs (Al-Qahtani, 2021; Cahyono et al., 2021).

Table 3.

Statistical Results of RQ3: Training Program Impact

Group	Pre-Training Perspective (%)	Post-Training Perspective (%)	p-value
Male Instructors	60	85	<0.05
Female Instructors	65	90	<0.05

The training program on pragmatics had a statistically significant positive impact on both male and female instructors' perspectives regarding the importance of pragmatics instruction, with both groups showing a marked increase in post-training perspectives (male instructors from 60% to 85%, female instructors from 65% to 90%), each with a p-value of <0.05. This increase demonstrates that structured training significantly enhances instructors' recognition of pragmatics as an integral component of language instruction, supporting findings by Cahyono et al. (2021), who noted that explicit training programs often improve instructors' confidence and preparedness to teach pragmatics effectively.

Moreover, the slightly higher increase in perspective among female instructors (from 65% to 90%) suggests that female instructors may particularly benefit from targeted professional development, potentially due to a greater initial need for pragmatics-related training as indicated in RQ3. Studies by Al-Qahtani (2021) and Khezrlou & Atai (2020) indicate that when instructors have access to structured, culturally relevant training, their ability to teach complex language functions, such as pragmatics, is enhanced, often leading to more dynamic classroom practices and improved student outcomes.

This shift in perspective aligns with recent literature, which underscores the transformative role of explicit, targeted pragmatics instruction in empowering instructors to integrate social language

functions into their teaching (Garcia & Lee, 2022; Takimoto, 2019). These findings suggest that training programs focused on pragmatics can significantly impact instructors' attitudes, motivating them to prioritize pragmatic competence in their classrooms.

Discussion

Discussion Related to the First Hypothesis

The findings reveal a remarkable gender-based disparity in access to pragmatics training; male instructors showed significantly higher levels of access compared to their female colleagues. In line with multiple studies, the study by Al-Qahtani (2021) aptly sheds light on the existence of gender-based disparities with regard to professional development opportunities within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Systemic barriers are rampant in Iran, and one of the many ways that these barriers act is through preventing female instructors from gaining access to specialized training programs that are needed for a critical domain such as pragmatics instruction, which needs targeted development specific to learners' and instructors' needs (Garcia & Lee, 2022; Khezrlou, 2023).

Policies sensitive to gender are thus designed to ensure equal access to opportunities for professional development, considering these large disparities. As Garcia and Lee (2022) and Mahmoudi and Rezaei (2023) have rightly noted, the existence of barriers that are specific to gender

in programs on training only serves to continue inequities that already exist, which may compromise the overall quality of instruction and ultimately affect learner outcomes adversely. Such critical gaps in professional development can be successfully bridged by adopting flexible schedules for training that respond to needs in diversity, prioritizing financial resources for underrepresented groups, and carefully tailoring educational resources to meet the peculiar needs of female instructors.

This appeal to gender-sensitive practices is a feature of a broader set of instructional policy trends that put a premium on the value of diversity and inclusion within educational contexts. These reforms will go a long way in ensuring that all educators have access to equitable training opportunities in order to empower them with the capacity to successfully teach practical competence to students. Strategically, the adoption of such practices creates a professional environment that is supportive and respectful—one that can easily adapt and respond to the diverse needs of EFL instructors, as revealed in the study by Smith et al. (2023).

Discussion Related to the Second Hypothesis

The findings from the research reveal clear and significant gendered preferences when it comes to the improvement of pragmatics instruction. In particular, it has been found that female instructors strongly emphasize the need for more professional development opportunities through which they can enhance their practices and skills in teaching. On the other hand, male instructors strongly emphasize the need for changes in the curriculum by focusing their attention on changing the structural elements in the content of education. Such preferences are in line with the findings of Garcia and Lee (2022) and also Taguchi et al. (2023), which both report and exemplify the tendency of female instructors to seek continuous support and development while highlighting the emphasis of male instructors on making structural changes within the curriculum itself.

It is evident from the emphasis put by female instructors on professional development that they are very much aware of the existing gaps in access to training opportunities. They see such gaps and

understand the need for support that will address their particular needs, which in effect will boost their confidence levels as well as their effectiveness in the classroom as educators. This view resonates with the work of Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak (2017) and more recent findings presented by Farhadi et al. (2024), which together emphasize the critical importance of continuous and inclusive training programs for improving overall teaching outcomes and ensuring that all educators have what they need to be able to succeed.

On the other hand, the attention that male instructors are giving to the revisions of the curriculum indicates that they perceive themselves as being somewhat better prepared to tackle the challenges associated with pragmatic instruction. However, these instructors express a desire for a more cohesive integration of content at the foundational level in order to create a standardized approach to teaching pragmatic competence. This viewpoint is supported by the findings of Takimoto (2019) and the research conducted by Zarei and Ebadi (2023), both of which underscore the notion that the frequency of training sessions is linked to the preparedness of instructors to promote and support changes in the curriculum.

These findings carry important implications for a needed dual approach in the targeted professional development of women instructors to fill the training gaps and further integrate pragmatics into the curriculum in order to fulfill the broader pedagogical goals of EFL programs.

Discussion Related to the Third Hypothesis

The really important and salient positive effect that pragmatics training has on instructors' views brings to the spotlight the transformative potential inherent in structured professional development programs. These essential findings are corroborated by the study of Cahyono et al. (2021) and Akbari and Yazdani (2023), which report that specific and well-designed training not only increases the confidence of instructors but also equips them with the ability to incorporate pragmatics in their classrooms meaningfully.

It is particularly noteworthy that female instructors demonstrated a much higher increase in their positive attitudes after the training sessions,

which strongly supports the critical importance of providing structured training programs that are also culturally relevant to the participants. This specific finding aligns well with the ones presented by researchers Karimi and Gohari (2020) as well as Khezlrou and Atai (2023), both of whom report the amplified benefits that training can provide for instructors who have had limited prior exposure to instruction in pragmatics. These findings emphasize and underline the critical importance of providing continuous and easily accessible training opportunities. This training is indispensable in equipping instructors with the necessary skills, which are required to effectively cope with the emerging pedagogical challenges that arise in today's educational landscape and also in meeting the diverse needs of learners. Moreover, pragmatics training plays a pivotal role in enabling instructors to model effective communicative strategies in real-world contexts, enhancing learners' pragmatic competence in these settings. With the investment in systematic, inclusive, and culturally responsive professional development initiatives, Iranian EFL programs would have the potential to improve both the quality of instruction provided and the outcomes experienced by learners in an increasingly globalized world (Rahimi & Asgharnejad, 2024).

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the imperative need to make pragmatics training part of Iranian EFL programs in a way that can reduce possible disparities between male and female instructors. The research findings point out that male and female instructors enjoy equal pragmatics-related professional development opportunities. In fact, this difference in instructors' access to training programs is being regarded as highly impactful on their teaching behavior and efficacy. By highlighting such discrepancies, the study supports curriculum development that focuses on pragmatic competence and provides every instructor with the chance to learn how to teach such strategies. The emphasis on customized professional development is far more significant in moving the attitudes and teaching practices of instructors forward. As noted in the study, pragmatics-centered training allowed the instructors to be much more confident in their

pedagogical incorporation of such concepts. This not only enhances their confidence but also enriches the learning experience for students who develop a deeper understanding of language use in social contexts. Since pragmatic competence forms the very foundation of effective communication, especially in cross-cultural contexts, these training needs cannot be taken lightly if one wants to prepare learners for the challenges arising in real-life situations.

Implications of the Study

The implications of this study are multifold and can be divided into pedagogical and practical perspectives:

Pedagogical implications: The inclusion in the EFL syllabus of activities focusing on pragmatics may greatly enhance learners' performance in real-life interactions. Emphasis on requesting, apologizing, and also the understanding of cultural colloquialisms will give students the competencies necessary for effective communication in various contexts. This line of action encourages language proficiency and also prepares the learner for intercultural communication where miscommunication might result in misunderstandings.

Practical Implications: Indeed, the results have shown that targeted, gender-responsive training programs could reduce some of the instructional gaps between male and female instructors through precisely tailored training. Programs of this nature should also be made sensitive to the different challenges each group faces as a means of affording equal opportunities for access to all resources and professional opportunities. By so doing, an inclusive learning environment can help minimize such inequities, generally improve teaching quality, and thereby improve learning outcomes as well.

Contribution of the Study

The current study makes a number of useful contributions to the area of EFL teaching and teacher training as follows:

–Bringing the gender dimension to explain access to pragmatics-related professional development, this study underlines systemic inequities within the Iranian EFL context and points toward ways of developing more equitable and inclusive training programs.

- The present study underlines the differential needs of novice and experienced instructors and offers practical recommendations on how professional development initiatives should be designed to address the needs of teachers at different career stages.
- Curricular Guidelines for Teaching: The study provides evidence-based recommendations regarding the inclusion of pragmatics in the EFL curriculum, incorporating views and suggestions from instructors themselves so that such programs address not only linguistic but also cultural aspects of language use.
- The present study contributes to the developing research into pragmatics instruction by systematically exploring how gender and experience influence instructional practices, thus adding to the burgeoning literature on pragmatics education in non-native English-speaking contexts.
- This study identifies the barriers and opportunities in professional development, thus justifying a call for targeted programs with increased confidence and capacities among teachers to instruct pragmatic competence effectively.
- Such findings make it very imperative for general implications on the EFL instructions of today's similar socio-cultural contexts in providing such frameworks within which a researcher or an educator would work towards tending imbalances to uphold pragmatic competencies within such educational sets.
- The work shall enrich not only the academic debate in the field but also give concrete recommendations for policymakers, curriculum designers, and teacher trainers looking at quality improvements with regard to inclusion issues in EFL teaching.

Limitations of the Study

Though this study gives pertinent insights that improve the professional needs of EFL instructors in Iran, it has limitations. The focus of this study on university-level instructors hence limits its generalization to other levels of instruction such as primary and secondary levels. Convenience sampling during data collection further biases the sample to be considered as the representative of

Iranian EFL instructors' larger population. Consequently, these limitations make any generalization outside this highly specific context to be very cautious.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research should continue to investigate more factors that influence rhetoric and instructional practices in EFL instructors, including institutional support structures through which training opportunities in pragmatics instruction might be made more widely available. Research into the ways institutional policies make access to professional development possible or impossible could provide further insight into how such training environments might be more equitably provided. Moreover, pragmatics instruction should be studied in how effective it is regarding learner outcomes, and how effective teaching practices transfer into improved learner communication skills. Research could consider how emerging technologies and online resources might facilitate professional development in pragmatics, especially because of recent shifts to remote learning environments due to the pandemic. Addressing these will significantly contribute to future research in improving EFL instruction and adequately preparing learners for successful intercultural communication. This heavy expansion provides a holistic conclusion that summarizes key findings while giving an elaboration on implications, limitations, delimitations, and suggestions for further research based on your original content. Feel free to notify me where modifications are needed or where you would want more information added.

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